

Disney in the Era of the Science Fiction Blockbuster

From its modest beginnings in the 1920s, the Walt Disney Corporation has been at the forefront of developments in cinematic technology, either by creating its own groundbreaking innovations or by popularizing recent breakthroughs made elsewhere. Meanwhile, since the 1950s, Disney has regularly dabbled in science fiction film, a genre famous for its historical use in introducing new cinematic technology (e.g. *Metropolis* (1927), *Forbidden Planet* (1956), *Jurassic Park* (1993)). Disney, however, usually showcases its technological innovations through genres other than science fiction, especially in fantasy. Aside from a few films in the 1960s, the only major exception to this rule was during the science fiction boom of the late 1970s and 1980s, when Disney produced a succession of technologically groundbreaking yet only moderately popular films such as *The Black Hole* (1979), *Tron* (1982) and *Flight of the Navigator* (1986). This exception is a reflection of the dramatic shift of the film industry toward an emphasis on science fiction blockbusters and special effects, of Disney's struggle to remain competitive and redefine itself following Walt Disney's passing and of Disney's efforts to find its place in the science fiction genre.